

HIGHER





HIGHEND



8



18

EDITOR'S LETTER	6
DEFINING THE ACNE AESTHETIC	8
JONNY JOHANSSON	18
RUSSELL WESTBROOK	28
READY-TO-WEAR: LOOKBOOK	34
COLLECTION	40
IS ACNE WINNING SIMPLICITY?	42

TABLE OF CONTENTS



58



82

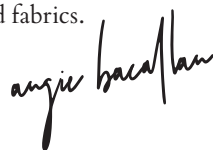
THE ACNE INFLUENCE	50
IN COLLABORATION WITH ACNE	58
SS20: RUNWAY	64
THINKING ACNE STUDIOS	78
WHY YOU SHOULD BE WEARING ACNE	82
WHAT'S NEXT FOR ACNE?	90
DIRECTORY	100

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Reader,

HIGHEND is a bi-annual publication dedicated to showcasing the essence, the appreciation of the craft and the direction of established and upcoming fashion houses. Each dedicated issue offers exclusive features and interviews with the creative minds behind the fashion house, insights straight off the runway, unique lookbooks and breath-taking pictorials. This is dedicated to all you fashion enthusiasts, brand worshipers and those who want to explore new styles but don't know which end to start — so, why not the high end?

Starting with a Stockholm-based fashion house with a multidisciplinary approach, Acne Studios. Through founder and Creative Director Jonny Johansson's interest in photography, art, architecture and contemporary culture, an alternative path has been found, turning Acne Studios into a well-respected creator of ready-to-wear, magazines, furniture, books and exhibitions. The collections are defined by Jonny Johansson's signature juxtaposing design and attention to detail, with an emphasis on tailoring and an eclectic use of materials and custom-developed fabrics.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "angie bacallan". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.



HIGHEND

WRITTEN BY:
ALEXANDER FURY

PHOTOGRAPHER:
EVA AL DESNUDO



FEATURE

DEFINING THE ACNE AESTHETIC



HAIR STYLIST:
HOLLI SMITH

MAKEUP ARTIST:
THOMAS DE KLUYVER

Acne is the most boring label in fashion today. Though a provocative idea, it isn't true. But hopefully Jonny Johansson – the label's 45-year-old co-founder and designer – will appreciate the sentiment.

"I THINK SOMETIMES I'M SEEN AS BORING. BUT IT'S THAT AREA OF FASHION WHERE I FEEL COMFORTABLE; IT'S NOT ABOUT JUXTAPOSITION, REALLY, IT'S ABOUT BEING MODERN, BEING VERY NOW. THAT'S WHY WE STARTED DOING JEANS, BECAUSE IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT GARMENT FOR EVERYONE NOWADAYS."

Jeans are important, sure, but they're not seen as especially amazing, creative, or sexy. They're not really seen as a designed item, today. In fact, the notion of designer jeans feels dated, mired in those faux-vocative underwear-exposing Nineties Calvin Klein adverts. But they were the kick-off point for

Acne's clothing line, back in 1997. Johansson created 100 pairs, gave them to 100 influential friends, and a cult was born. They remain a bestselling product category for the company, and incorporated in almost every collection — an example, Women's SS20 runway.

Acne Studios, as it is still collectively known, was originally intended to have a multidisciplinary atmosphere to mimic The Factory of Andy Warhol – another creative who understood the power of boring. In its early years, it dabbled in graphic design and film production. Even today, the fashion house produces a large-format biannual magazine, Acne Paper. It features people such as Fran Lebowitz, Richard Serra and Mikhail Baryshnikov, and seems to only incidentally contain Acne clothing.

Acne is an acronym, for Ambition to Create Novel Expression. It reminds me of Acme, that fictional corporation which provides Wile E Coyote with detonating devices to try catch his ever-elusive Road Runner. It has a universality. It feels like a name you know already – something

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FW19



THE ACNE AESTHETIC



FASHION EDITOR/STYLIST:
CELESTINE COONEY

HIGHEND



FASHION EDITOR/STYLIST:
CELESTINE COONEY

that has been there for ever. Acne clothes, at their best, have that feeling, too. They aren't about the scary realms of fashion.

says Johansson. "It doesn't sound so sexy, but when I started fashion it was the time of Helmut Lang and Prada, who were making amazing clothing without being too abstract."

"THE CHALLENGE I HAVE BEEN HAVING IS TO BE ABLE TO MAKE REALLY INTERESTING DESIGNS WHICH ARE FUNCTIONAL BUT STILL REMAIN INTERESTING,"

That's the territory Acne still occupy. Although their catwalk shows, staged first in London and now in Paris, flirt, to varying degrees of success, with styles that the industry may dub 'editorial' (oddly fitting trousers, ungainly proportions, frankly ugly fabrics), the core Acne style is not only ready-to-wear, but easy to wear. It mimics Scandinavian furniture design with its simplicity and focus on fusing both form and function into clothes that work, rather than just look the part. You can't help but think of Ikea, and their championing of interesting design that still does its job incredibly well. Acne's doing the same for your wardrobe.

"The older I get, I realise I have a Swedish inheritance," allows Johansson. "I never really knew about it, I almost fought against it, and tried to be international... I think we are different; local and global at the same time." That paradox is accurate. Acne is global – but it's been achieved by exporting that local sense of Swede ease. It has 650 outlets in 66 countries around the world, and a turnover of over €100m, achieved without advertising, but rather through the cultish pull of the clothing.

Its ironic, considering that fashion wasn't what Johansson wanted to do in the first

place. "I never wanted to be a fashion designer. I have taken the place of somebody who maybe wanted it – but I have a music background, really. I found the whole fashion thing through music and it's all about self-expression in the end." Rather than a hindrance, Johansson finds his lack of technical training liberating. "It gives a great confidence because you have no confidence," he laughs at his own tangential logic. "I never felt that I would be hurt if someone said that I was bad, because I am a musician – but that is just personal to me." (Johansson, incidentally, still plays his guitar, albeit not professionally.)

That perhaps explains the sense of cool that pervades Acne's clothing – imbuing even a humble (or boring) white shirt with something elevated. In an odd way, where other designer labels stand for tradition and a certain way of working, Acne stands for cool. Look at the collaborations the label indulges in, with everyone from Lord Snowdon (on a book, and a complementary range of blue shirts), to the transsexual fashion magazine Candy (on a clutch of blouses for him and/or her). When they decided to launch a capsule range of denim, the French fashion house Lanvin worked with Acne. The former's sense of tradition and couture workmanship fused with Acne's cool. And the fact that they make great denim.

The latest expansion in the Acne empire is underwear. Sort of. Acne has had underwear for years. "I was wearing boxer shorts at that moment and there weren't really any that were working," shrugs Johansson of its genesis. This time, rather than creating something bog-standard (those boxers, although slender-cut, were nothing special), Johansson and his team tried to give them a sense of the twisted boredom Acne has made its own. Acne's pants come in a selection of odd, fleshy colours. Those nudist tones, and the fact they fit snugly to the body, are because, Johansson says, he pre-

fers going commando. It's not a normal marketing spiel for hawking underpants.

"Underwear in general; if you see a man in underwear it's kind of embarrassing, so I've been playing a lot with that thought," states Johansson. "They're not too sexy... That's kind of sexy in a way." When I mention the tactics recently employed by a mass-market designer company to promote their underwear – involving the soft-core pornographic paraphernalia of barely-clothed 'selfies' and hashtags, he wrinkles his nose. "That just smells of marketing and branding. Yes we all do it but it should be done in a more subtle way and not in bad taste. It's a sad idea of using people – because they think that's what they have to do to feel appreciated." In short, it doesn't sound cool.

**"IT'S ALWAYS
THIS ASPECT OF
COOL – WHAT IS
COOL? I GUESS IT'S
PERSONAL."**

It is personal, to him and hence to Acne. Cool is not about adding extraneous design features to the garments, but about refining what's there, to make them perfect. Sometimes, imperfection is perfect: I'm thinking of an outfit from their spring menswear collection, where eensy-weensy shorts barely peek out below an oversized shirt and bomber jacket, above bare legs and feet shoved into thick, Velcro-tabbed trainers. It looks like the sort of awkward, gangly outfit you might have been forced to assemble from stuff in the lost property bin when you forgot your PE kit. But there's something about the pieces that makes the whole look compelling, interesting, exciting even – despite its boredom. How paradoxical. How Acne. **HE**



THE ACNE AESTHETIC

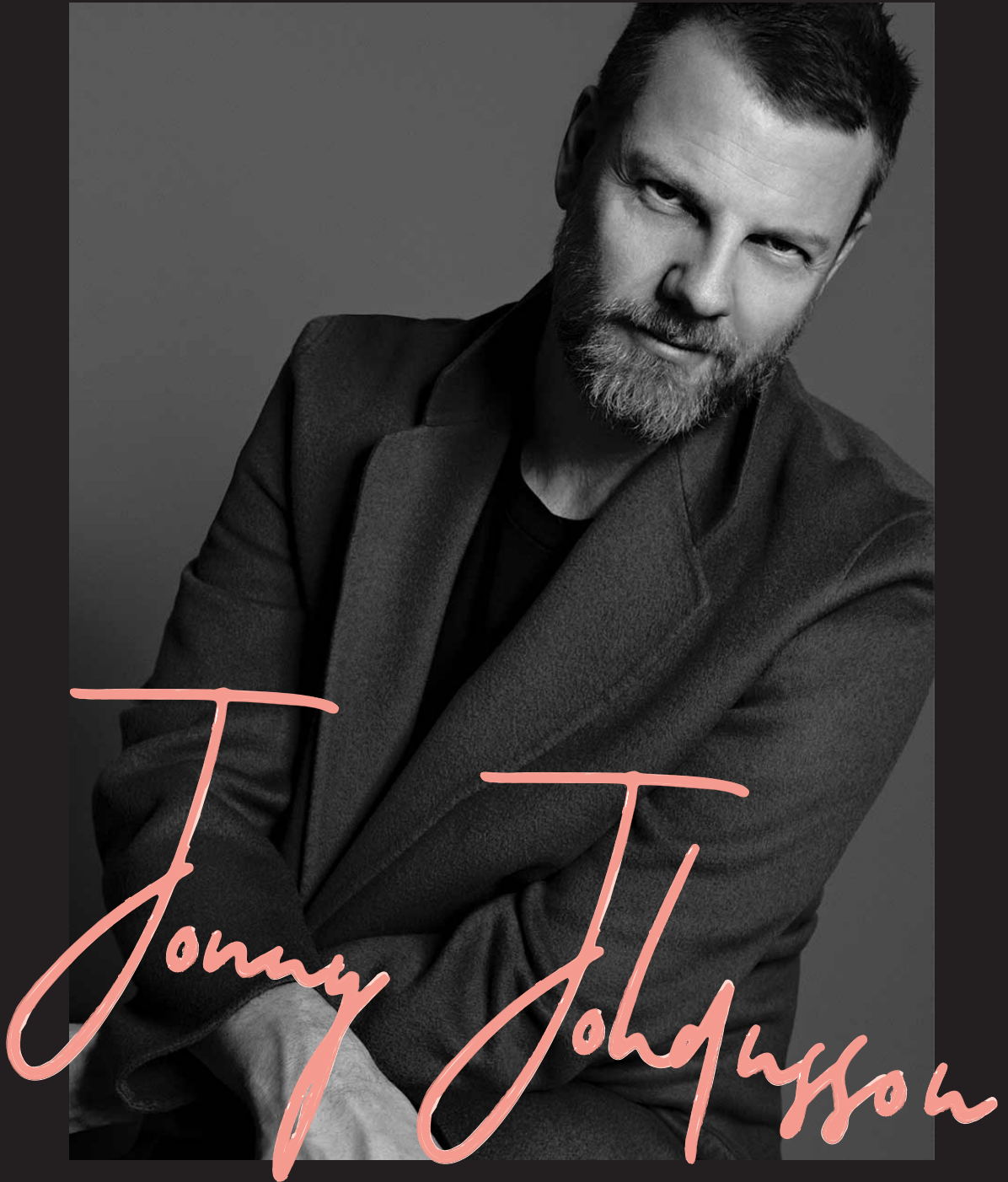


HAIR & MAKEUP STYLISTS:
HOLLI SMITH & THOMAS DE KLUYVER



WRITTEN BY:
ANGIE LI BACALLAN

IN CONVERSATION WITH
JONNY JOHANSSON



Since its inception in 1996, the Swedish brand Acne Studios has become synonymous with arty fashion. Visit any Acne Studios store in the world—you pick, could be any one of the Swedish label's locations in Paris, New York, L.A., Seoul, Hong Kong or one of the other 24 cities around world—and you'll likely find the most-perfectly cut nylon bomber jacket hanging on the rack next to a sweater covered in jacquard hotdogs; or a crazy pair of pleated, high-gloss polyurethane trousers beside some simple, elegant wool suit pants.

Point is: no other brand is menswear has more perfectly balanced the eccentric with the essential. Makes sense, then, that Acne, founded by creative director Jonny Johansson and three partners in 1996, started out making something that can be equal parts both: jeans. Today, the brand is a rising player in global fashion, capable of hanging with the most avant-garde and mass market designers alike. That duality just might be what makes the seemingly anonymous brand with the funny pink shopping bags so compelling right now. *HIGHEND* met with its founder, Jonny Johansson, a man impassioned

by art, photography and music, who breathes his love for contemporary culture directly into his creativity.

Acne Studios began as a collective united beneath the banner of "Ambition to Create Novel Expression". What was the groups intentions?

As a group we're united by mutual admiration. The others admired me less, but I was accepted anyway [he laughs]. We wanted to explore a number of creative outlets, as contemporary artists who express themselves via different media. We wanted to combine music, moving images, illustration... We wanted to somehow analyse our times, to explore the future of our cultural milieu, to offer our point of view. Generally speaking, we were seeking to grasp and to define exactly what contemporary means.

How did fashion enter into the project as a whole?

It arrived quite naturally, being the collective glue that links all creative disciplines. We knew that the public's engagement would be much more lively via fashion than other forms of expression.

Do you feel like your collections have gotten increasingly personal to you with each season?

I'm really into the word "honest" in fashion. I'm trying to stay contemporary, you know, and also personal at the same time. I find sometimes fashion becomes about exoticism. I think the reality is more interesting, you know, everyday life in a way. It comes naturally, and with that comes confidence. I'm not so nervous about what people are going to think. If people like what I do it's good, but when I was younger I was trying to please others and then I lost some of my honesty.

Pop culture and fashion are so connected now. Does that inspire you much to do more?

There's always this need for companies to promote themselves via celebrities, but I think it's a double-edged sword. I like Drake for instance, I think he's an amazing songwriter, but I'd like it to stay that way. I'm not the person that needs to cross-breed, or have to dress him in my clothing. I think what's interesting is when people find your clothing and they interpret it in their own way.

Otherwise it seems manufactured.

The whole celebrity circus has always scared me—you would like somebody to ask for your clothing rather than forcing them to wear your clothing. I like the celebrities to stay at a distance. I'd rather watch them or just enjoy what they do, than label them. You become very bored, I think

even when the celebrities go to the fashion shows in the clothing that is made for them from that brand—do people really buy that? I'm not sure.

It can also just be a way for brands to get more exposure on Instagram and social media.

Yeah true, but I also think there's a lot of things in fashion people think they have to do. Do you see what I mean with that? This is like an industry where there's a lot of truth and things you should do that isn't right. You know, you're supposed to, I meet a lot of like young designers that want to part of the fashion circus, and actually, you know, it's not a circus. It's really about expression. Creative expression within that field. It's not about who's wearing it, really. I like the democratic point of view rather than the exclusive.

Have you ever wanted to dress a celebrity in Acne Studios?

I liked Prince, and I like the way he dressed and he's been inspiring obviously, but I think there's something else going on at the moment in these last ten years. It's been more about branding than anything else. Like if I see Rihanna for instance, you know, it's just the latest brand. There's no expression. She expresses amazingly with her voice, but the other communication is soulless. Branded.

Speaking of branding. What's up with the pink shopping bags? They have become sort of iconic for fashion fans, and they are so instantly recognizable. Has that kind

**WE EXPLORE
NEW FORMS
AND NEW IDEAS.
AND I WOULD
HOPE THAT WE
ENCOURAGE
PEOPLE TO
EXPRESS
THEMSELVES
VIA FASHION.**



FW19

of branding been important for you and the company?

I wanted this pink paper because people considered pink being ugly. They didn't want the pink bag. And that's like when we did the first pair of jeans—I gave it to a lot of my friends and most of my friends said “yes, thank you,” but didn't use the clothing and thought it was pretty weird. The same with the pink bag. If everybody thinks it's beautiful, it's wrong in a way. I don't want it to be sort of, blah, you know, like soulless. I want it to have some sort of energy, and I can tell you when we did the pink bag, it was not very popular, but I knew—I'm like the pink generation. I don't think there's another generation that will put up with pink.

What about the store interiors? They are instantly recognizable.

I think it's based on the joy of doing it more than anything else. I always said that I don't want the McDonald's concept, or like a Gucci sort of store where it's all looking the same. Not that I don't like Gucci, but they're always very, very similar everywhere. They create the format and then they mass distribute. And that becomes a bit disconnected from time, disconnected from the area, or the place they're in. I think you always have to consider what space you're in, where you are, what your opinion is about that. It's more work, and it's probably more expensive in the end too, but it's also more fun.

Some of your designs really push the boundaries of traditional fashion for men. Do you feel compelled

to introduce more new ideas to menswear?

When I was a kid in school, I was always embarrassed by how my dad was dressing, and he tried to push some boundaries. He wasn't dressed exactly like—what I thought were—the best parents. He just did his own thing. Then after a while I started doing it myself. It's always been about communication for me with fashion, not so much about fitting in only.

Beyond a certain look, Acne Studios sets itself apart by revisiting functional pieces, with a very personal inflection applied to questions of volume and colour.

Exactly, we weren't aiming to promote a self-contained concept or any kind of uniform. We never, for instance, included our garments in the Acne Paper. We prefer to imagine our pieces mixed with the rest of a client's wardrobe.

Why begin with denim?

It just seemed logical, as the jean is the contemporary garment par excellence. But it was far from our intention to become a denim brand. The instant success of our jeans was in some ways a poisoned chalice because it was subsequently quite difficult to communicate the fact that our creative ambitions went much further.

While Sweden lacks any distinct heritage in terms of fashion, its design culture is very strong. In what ways has it influenced you?

Swedish furniture design is predicated on notions of functionality and authenticity. It took me a while to understand the ways in which this cultural heritage influenced me. But I would

finally come to admit that we are, in part, constructed by the places we live. And this is why it's important to me that we manufacture in Stockholm.

Do you ever feel like the history of Scandinavian design is a burden? That people want to lump you into that tradition even if you don't really fit?

Yeah, I think, when we got our first press recognition, I was asked, like in every interview if we were doing Scandinavian design, and I never really understood how to answer the question. I did a big project on a Scandinavian architect, it took like one year, to see if I have some relationship to Scandinavian design, trying to figure out what it is. My big conclusion was that I'm a maximalist, unfortunately. And the thing is, I think maximalism is more important and democratic than minimalism. Minimalism is very restricted. We're more related to nature in terms of colors, and textures, how things are produced or whatever it is, and then at the same time very functional.

You may be a maximalist, but Acne Studios is really good at making, simple, well-designed basic pieces. Do you think about those items differently than you do the more progressive stuff?

I don't. No. I always think that they have the same value of something that's more abstract. I believe a lot that they have the same value. It's very common for designers to put in a hierarchy. I don't like that, I think they're as important in the big picture.

How do you account for the cult that young urbanites the world over have dedicated to Acne Studios?

I think we understood how to remain flexible while interacting with a vast community. And additionally, we have a policy of honesty, attributing prices according to each garment's cost of fabrication, and we've never paid a celebrity to wear our clothes. We explore new forms and new ideas. And I would hope that we encourage people to express themselves via fashion.

You have just launched your own handbags. What is the motivation behind this?

Up until now, I sometimes added a vintage bag to finish a look, but the obsession with it-bags has always bothered me. I determined that if ever we were to produce bags, they would have to comply with our general methodology. For instance, the "Rope Bag" came about as we were experimenting with reducing the volume of garments. By way of a strap I used a length of rope lying around the studio. I waited a long time to feel fully satisfied before presenting bags for the first time, in our spring-summer 2016 runway show. **HE**



INTERVIEW

PHOTOGRAPHER:
ANDERS KYLBERG

HIGHEND

RUSSELL WESTBROOK

THE CAPSULE COLLECTION

WRITTEN BY:
ADAM MARK





FEATURE

PHOTOGRAPHER:
JUERGEN TELLER

Westbrook



Shortly after Russell Westbrook appeared in Acne Studios' Juergen Teller-shot SS19 campaign, the two parties collaborated on a second project, resulting in a denim-centric capsule for FW19. As a studied reinterpretation of a few key silhouettes, the Acne Studios x Russell Westbrook capsule collection will be made available online exclusively at Highsnobiety on October 27, one day before general release. Why the decision to feature Frasse? It's all about the next generation of fashion fans and their attitude towards style. "I've seen this new generation's attitude to fashion where the cut, the shape and the character of the garment is the crucial thing, rather than seeking approval from society or to follow set norms," explains Johansson.

But how did this all begin? As Westbrook grew into a notable force on the court, the Houston Rockets point guard and eight-time NBA All-Star simultaneously developed a reputation in the world of fashion. Separating himself from the status quo of NBA-Star style, Westbrook's participation sees the latest capsule consolidating the uniquely expressive world of a prized sportsman with a brand long regarded for producing some of the industry's best denim products.

Given his enigmatic nature and unique personality, tying Westbrook to a pure-denim collection makes total sense. Regarded by many as the ultimate expresser of personality, denim grows with the wearer, creating one-of-one garments that tell a particular story.

Released as a selection of outerwear, shirts, jeans, and shorts, pieces will come in palettes of blue, light blue, and teal green acid wash denim, together with more basic black and white options. The manner in which the collection's cuts and washes effortlessly interact speaks to the design lineage of Acne Studios, both past and present.

The NBA star, who has his own clothing line named Honor the Gift, had fun perfecting the design process that led to his first collection with Acne Studios. He says:

"ACNE STUDIOS IS ALREADY AN UNBELIEVABLE BRAND THAT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF, SO I'M JUST HAPPY AND BLESSED TO HAVE A COLLECTION WITH THEM AND TO BE ABLE TO SHOW MY CREATIVE SIDE."

Making up the collection's outerwear component is a denim anorak and utility vest. The anorak in particular is a refreshing departure from the silhouette's usual employment of lightweight shell fabrics, and very much goes in the opposite direction of what you might expect from a sportsman like Westbrook. Next to this, a short-sleeved denim shirt featuring a square-cut upper is indicative of tried-and-true design, pairing well with the capsule's take on Acne's popular Bermuda Short. And last, though certainly not least, a pair of straight-leg, five-pocket jeans anchor the release to a more timeless foundation. **HE**

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RUSSELL WESTBROOK





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PHOTOGRAPHER:
ALESSANDRO VIERO

FASHION EDITOR/STYLIST:
URSINA GYSI

HAIR & MAKEUP:
HOLLI SMITH & PETER PHILIPS



LOOKBOOK

READY-TO-WEAR:
LOOKBOOK

With assistance from AI, Johnny Johansson whipped up a stream of modern, warped and distorted silhouettes with an old-world veneer.

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LOOKBOOK



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COLLECTION

an ensemble of fall/winter outerwear pieces from the Acne Studios FW19 runway



1 *Textured leather coat*
This black coat is crafted from lamb nappa leather with a spongy grain finish. It's finished with bonded jersey backing and Acne Studios branded lining. Worn by Lev Uliesov on the Men's FW19 collection.

2 *Oversized fur jacket*
An oversized, mid-length cream/off white oversized lamb shearling jacket with long fur trims. Worn by Kris Grikaite on the Women's FW19 collection.

3 *Checked overcoat*
Wool-blend overcoat patterned with vichy check design, finished with classic welt pockets and matching waist tie. Worn by Maikls Mihelsons on the Men's FW19 collection.

COLLECTION



4 *Faux fur coat*
Double-breasted front
beige/brown faux fur coat,
shaped to wide notched
lapels with a relaxed fit.
Worn by Valerija Kelava
on the Women's FW19
collection.

5 *Oversized mac coat*
Camel/pink oversized
mac coat with a concealed
front button placket, cuffed
sleeves, raglan shoulders
with a matching tie belt
with eyelet details. Worn by
Marte Rubens on the Men's
FW19 collection.

6 *Double-breasted coat*
A black oversized,
double-breasted coat with
exaggerated shoulders, and
classic melton undercollar.
Worn by Marte Mei van
Haaster on the Women's
FW19 collection.

THE END